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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
PRESS CONFERENCE
BRUSSELS, BELGIUM
MAY 24, 1994

DELASKI: Thank you for coming. I'm Kathleen de Laski, the Spokeswoman for the U.S. Defense Department. Dr. Perry is the U.S. Secretary of Defense--William Perry. Next to him is the U.S. Ambassador to NATO, Ambassador Robert Hunter, and next to him is Ash Carter, who is the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counterproliferation, and he also has the Russia portfolio. And with that, Dr. Perry has a few opening words to say, and then I'll point to people for questions. Thank you, Dr. Perry.

SECRETARY PERRY: Thank you, Kathleen. Let me start off by noting with regret that Secretary-General Manfred Woerner could not be here today. I do want to say, though, that Deputy Secretary-General Balanzino did an excellent job of chairing the meeting. Also I would like to note that this is my first DPG/NPG Nuclear Planning Group as the Secretary of Defense. I've been to many NATO meetings in the past, and in particular was at this equivalent meeting a year ago, acting for the Secretary. But this is the first meeting in which I have been the Secretary of Defense.

This is also the first NATO Defense meeting since the Summit. And I'd like to remind you that there were three Summit initiatives of some significance. The first--Partnership for Peace; the second--Combined Joint Task Force; and the third--Nonproliferation. Of those three I'd like to speak in some more detail about the Partnership for Peace.

I'll start off by observing that the PFP is a fast-moving train. Already we have 18 signatories to the PFP. The brick and mortar is in place at Mons. The countries, in fact, the signatories, will be visiting Mons tomorrow night. We also would like to welcome The Netherlands' offer for the first field experiment [exercise] and SACLANT's proposal for the first maritime experiment [exercise]. I should mention parenthetically that the United States intends to participate in both of those exercises. And the Polish have made a very welcome offer for an exercise to be conducted in Poland.

Let me move from there to the subject of Bosnia. And I believe that NATO should be very proud of the role that it has played in Bosnia. It was through the efforts of the combined air forces of several of the NATO countries that we have succeeded in stopping the aerial bombardment of Bosnian cities for more than a year now. We have stopped that aerial bombardment. Prior to the imposition of the no-fly zone, there were numerous of bombing of cities, and that now has been stopped. Secondly, we have stopped the aerial bombardment of Sarajevo, and to remind you, that has been stopped now for more than one hundred days. And prior to that

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time, in the more than a year of bombardment before that, there were as many as eight thousand civilians killed during this bombardment. So I think between this aerial bombardment stopping and the artillery bombardment stopping, we've arguably saved thousands of lives by the intervention of NATO. That stopping of artillery bombardment has now been extended to other safe haven areas, in particular to Gorazde, and to four other safe haven areas. On top of this, there has been a continuous aerial and ground delivery of humanitarian supplies, again by NATO aircraft. This has been going on longer than the Berlin airlift. That also has been instrumental in saving thousands of lives, particularly during the last two winters.

All of these NATO actions have been organized around reducing the violence, especially the civilian casualties that otherwise would have taken place, or in the case of the humanitarian efforts, in mitigating the effects of the violence. All of these are activities that NATO is conducting while the peace process is going on. I might comment with respect to that that the Contact Group has made, I think, very significant progress in the last few weeks, in particular the last two meetings in Geneva, making real progress towards achieving a cessation of hostilities to be followed by, we hope, a sustainable peace agreement.

Finally, I'd like to comment that I'm looking forward to hearing the briefing tonight from my colleague in Russia, Minister Grachev.

With those opening comments, I'd like to open the floor for questions. Suzanne?

Q: Susanne Schafer, Associated Press. Mr. Secretary, the Russian Defense Minister, Mr. Grachev, says upon arrival that he's interested in a separate agreement with NATO. But the Deputy Secretary-General just told us that NATO is opposed to a formal legalized agreement. Can you tell us why that exists--why that objection exists? And do you believe that there is some common ground that can be found here?

SECRETARY PERRY: I don't think I can add too much to what the Deputy Secretary-General said, except to say that this was discussed at the meeting of Defense Ministers, and that the position that he presented was agreed to by all of the Defense Ministers. There will be no special protocol for Russia as a member of the Partnership for Peace. That is to say, all Partnership for Peace members will follow the same rules. I would point out, however, that it is quite clear that Russia, just because of its size and because of its substantial military capability, has a potential for making a much greater contribution to the Partnership for Peace than any other country. We expect them to do that; we would encourage them to do that. Also, in addition to the Partnership for Peace, NATO and Russia have other cooperation channels to be

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structured, that are not in any way related to the Partnership for Peace. Indeed, we will see one of those channels of cooperation in action tonight when Minister Grachev comes to brief the NATO members. And there are other fields, in particular the fields of nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, where NATO and Russia have very special interests and very special reasons for working together in areas that have nothing to do with the Partnership for Peace. So we expect those other channels to be vigorously pursued.

Q: Dr. Perry, will these be informal channels? I mean, General Grachev suggested that he wants some kind of agreement, statement, whatever, formal, outside of the Partnership for Peace, outlining NATO's relationship with Russia. Is NATO willing to do that, and thereby increase the fears of other members of the PFP that Russia might somehow exert undue influence on NATO? Are you willing to make some kind of formal agreement with Russia outside of the Partnership in order to get them into the Partnership?

SECRETARY PERRY: Now as the Deputy Secretary General said, that will be a decision to be taken by the North Atlantic Council and that decision has not been taken at this point.

Q: So while you say there will be no special protocol for Russia inside the Partnership, you are not ruling out some kind of agreement outside of the Partnership?

SECRETARY PERRY: I do not think I would want to add to what I have already said on that subject.

Q: There is a lot of concern in Eastern Europe about your special relationship with Russia. As some people see it as very much the beginning of the second Yalta. How would you like to reassure those Central European countries?

SECRETARY PERRY: I believe that is an entirely inappropriate and misleading analogy. Let me speak first of all about the subject which I am most familiar with, which is the U.S. relationship for Russia. This is what we call a pragmatic partnership and we call it because it is entirely pragmatic, it is based on achieving the best interest of both countries.

One very important example of the pragmatic partnership, that is the ways in which Russia and the United States work together, is the United States assisting Russia in the dismantlement of the nuclear weapons that are in Russia. This is an activity which benefits not only the United States and Russia, but indeed benefits the entire world. And the programs that are underway right now already will be in the process of destroying--dismantling and destroying, thousands of nuclear weapons. So that's one particular example, which as I said is not only a benefit to our two countries, but is of benefit to the whole world.

Q: Mr. Secretary, completely a different subject. There has been a report that Congress wishes to impose a levy on the countries where United States' troops are stationed, in fact, to the amount of nine-tenths of the costs of these troops. What is the administration's view, what is your view on this, and do you believe that this can be stopped, or should it be stopped?

SECRETARY PERRY: The Administration opposes this proposal and I and the Administration will fight this every way we know how to.

Q: Mr. Secretary, do you agree to the proposed nuclear partnership between United States and Russia, which is already existing, should become part of the relationship between NATO and Russia? And if this be handled within NATO?

SECRETARY PERRY: There are some aspects of that nuclear relationship which are of interest to all of the Nations of NATO. In my presentation to the Nuclear Planning Group today, I briefed the NATO members on the activities that are going on and we think it is entirely appropriate that the other NATO nations not only be informed, but can participate in ways which they may be interested in and capable of doing.

Q: Mr. Secretary, the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Martino, who is currently in Washington for talks, asked for Italy to be represented in the contact group for Bosnia. Keeping in mind that the frictions that were even recently with one of the parts involved in NATO negotiations, the Croatsians, what's your opinion on that? Thanks.

SECRETARY PERRY: I think there is no doubt that Italy has an important role to play in determining how the peace agreement is reached in Bosnia. I do not think it would be appropriate for me to comment, specifically, on whether Italy should or should not be a member of the contact group.

Q: You call the Partnership for Peace a pragmatic program. If a partner called for consultations, according to Article 8 how would this pragmatic approach work?

SECRETARY PERRY: Could you clarify your question please?

Q: According to Article 8 Partnership for Peace consultations would be of need, in a case of a threat and according to your pragmatic approach what would this mean?

SECRETARY PERRY: That would depend on the nature of the threat, the time-urgency of the threat, and the seriousness of the threat. But it could very well involve a convening of the North Atlantic Council to consider the request for consultation by the Partner.

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Q: If Russia chooses not to sign the Partnership for Peace, what kind of impact do you think that would have on the alternate channels of communication that you referred to?

SECRETARY PERRY: The alternative channels of communication are important in and out of themselves and there are reasons for the United States and the other NATO nations to pursue those channels. There are reasons for Russia to pursue those channels. Whether or not the Partnership for Peace existed, whether or not Russia is a member of the Partnership for Peace, we hope very much that Russia will decide to become a member of Partnership for Peace because they have a lot to contribute to the Partnership for Peace.

They have quite clearly a very substantial military capability, can contribute to the joint exercises, and could certainly contribute to the peace-keeping operations. There are both the substantive and the political reasons for wanting Russia to be a member of the Partnership for Peace, for NATO wanting Russia to be a member of it and for Russia wanting to be a member of it.

Q: Mr. Secretary there have been a number of incidents, even in the last few days, pointing up the contradictions between the UNPROFOR commanders on the ground and for NATO's military leadership concerning the question of air strikes. Mr. Akashi and General Rose seem to have made it clear that since they believe the welfare of the troops on the ground would be jeopardized by airstrikes, they seem unlikely to call in any request. Do you think this, the fact that NATO has been put into a position of not carrying out these, is damaging its credibility and how long do you think this can be sustained?

SECRETARY PERRY: I think to answer that question, you have to look at the different elements of the NATO air support. I listed the four different ways that NATO provides air support, the humanitarian effort goes on unabated and has been, I think, an extremely credible effort. The deny flight area, the stopping of the aerial bombardment has been extremely effective and the credibility of NATO is exceedingly high in that area.

The enforcement of the no artillery bombardment zone around Sarajevo and Gorazde has been very effective it has not been evoked, called for in another safe area as yet. The one area where NATO has been, I think has been, unjustly criticized, has been in the area of close air support.

I would point out to you that close air support almost by its very nature is something that is called for...requested by the U.N. forces on the ground and therefore NATO can and should supply that only to the extent that it is requested. It seems to me that the criticism of NATO, that some have made, for not having supplied more air power and close air support is based on a naive view of what the appropriate role of what close air

support is. Close air support is the support of the forces on the ground as requested by those forces and only as requested by those forces.

Q: Peter Almond, from the Daily Telegraph. I understand that this evening that you will hear from General Grachev a bit more about their new military doctrine. In as much as that doctrine does spell out the extent of Russia's armed forces interest in the welfare of Russians in other neighboring states--the near/abroad. Could you outline your concerns about that and specifically what you want to hear from General Grachev?

SECRETARY FERRY: No. I would prefer to defer that question until I hear his speech. I will be giving another press conference tomorrow and would be willing to tackle that question at that time instead of speculating on what he may be saying tonight.

Ms delaski: Is there one more? Okay, thank you very much.